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AN OPEN LETTER TO AMERICAN TRAVELERS AND BUSINESSPEOPLE FROM U.S. AMBASSADOR TO KENYA MICHAEL E. RANNEBERGER

Dear Fellow Citizens:

I'm sure many of you have been following recent events in Kenya, specifically the crisis triggered by the sharply disputed results of elections held in late December. The resulting problems, including significant violence, were covered widely by the international media. This unfortunate chain of events led to a great deal of short-term damage to the Kenyan economy, and especially to the country's dynamic and world-class tourism industry.



Kenya faces formidable challenges in repairing the damage done by January's political crisis, but I can report that there have been positive developments that are opening up the economic climate and making Kenya once again the perfect locale for business and tourism. The country's rival political camps reached a landmark power-sharing agreement on February 28, and Parliament acted quickly to codify this through a constitutional amendment. President Kibaki and the Honorable Raila Odinga - now prime minister-designate - are working closely together to forge this new coalition of parties in a new spirit of goodwill and unity. At the same time, the private sector and development partners are committing additional assistance to Kenya's economic recovery and development. The U.S. recently pledged an additional \$25 million in new assistance to help in the reconciliation and reconstruction efforts.

Kenya is re-energized and is once again a country on the move. Kenya is a regional distribution center for trade across East Africa, home to the largest regional financial industry, and is investing aggressively in communications and transportation infrastructure. This is an extraordinarily good moment for those with an eye for business opportunities to take a close look at East Africa, and at Kenya. I urge you to look again at Kenya as an exciting destination for tourism and for doing business, be it trade or investment. In 2007, a record 102,000 Americans visited Kenya, many to enjoy the richness of the country's culture and the majesty of its landscapes and unparalleled wildlife. Others came to look for business opportunities or to engage in cultural and academic exchanges with Kenyan counterparts.

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But the main reason I am writing to invite you to give Kenya another look is the great partnership we have created between the U.S. and Kenya. During the recent crisis, the Kenyan people demonstrated once again their resolute commitment to representative democracy by exerting pressure on the polarized political leadership to achieve an accord. The U.S. strongly supported the Kenyan people to bring this about. As a result, U.S. stock in Kenya has never been higher (polls over the last year showed an 85 percent approval rating even before U.S. efforts during the crisis). Our friendship is based on the reality of the huge partnership between the United States and Kenya. On the one side, about \$2 billion flows to Kenya annually from all sources in the U.S. (U.S. Government assistance, remittances, foundations and NGOs, trade, private sector investment, and tourism), while the U.S. mission here is the largest in sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting the importance of the bilateral relationship (and Kenya's importance as an anchor of stability in this crucial region). On the other side, the United States hosts the largest Kenyan Diaspora anywhere in the world, and more Kenyan students than from any other sub-Saharan African country.

I urge you to read the U.S. State Department's Travel Warning for Kenya, available at www.state.gov. It is in place due to ongoing problems of crime and terrorism in Kenya that pre-date January's civil unrest. It does not recommend against travel to Kenya. It is similar to travel warnings issued for several dozen other countries, many of which are also close friends of the U.S.

I hope you'll consider visiting Kenya as a tourist or businessperson in 2008. The country is very much back in business and this is an exciting time to be here. There is a tangible spirit of renewed hope and opportunity. You'll find Kenyans to be welcoming and warm. I hope to see you here soon! I assure you that we will do our utmost to provide appropriate support and assistance for your engagement in Kenya. Karibu Kenya!

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